

Notes From The Underground

**A FREE PUBLICATION
OF
GENDER MOSAIC**

**CANADA'S OLDEST TRANSGENDER
SUPPORT GROUP
OTTAWA, ONTARIO**

**GENDER MOSAIC , P. O. BOX 7421,
VANIER, ONTARIO, K1L 8E4 (819) 770-1945**

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Notes From The Underground

A FREE PUBLICATION

DISCLOSURE IN THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

What are we really talking about?

By Margo Ross

There is a point in every transgender persons life when they for what ever reason they decide now is the time to take that leap of faith and tell someone. This edition of the

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Notes From the Underground is dedicated to that moment, the rational behind the decision and the outcome of your disclosure. For the most part the articles presented are those submitted to this editor in a response to a call for experiences and personal decision moments. I would like to thank all of those individuals who bravely submitted their text.

According to Webster's dictionary "DISCLOSURE" is defined as: to reveal a secret or to expose to view. The Thesaurus identifies nine synonyms each with a powerful connection to this process and they are: Announcement, Confession, Bombshell, Revelation, Admission, Declaration, Divulgence and Unveiling. The therapeutic community of medical doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrists has historically view the disclosure process as either a transfer of the burden of guilt and shame to the recipient or the manifestation of a deep

seated need to be identified as psychologically ill and call for intervention to cured the problem.

Almost all transgendered individuals are aware of the different feelings, thoughts, gender orientation and in some cases sexual orientation at a very early age, often prior to their sixth birthday. They have tried to understand these feelings, tried to over power them and even bargain with this urge or awareness. What they uniformly know is that they were not or could not tell any one because since now one else talked about it, you the transgendered person appeared to be the only one infected with this feared secret. True now as adults, in a community of growing information and support, we understand that we can no more change our eye colour than we can be untransgendered. That is not to say that with a lot of dedication transgender thoughts and

feelings can be controlled but they are not eliminated.

I ask you at this point to pause for a second and reflect on just what it is that we might want to reveal. Is it a simple statement of who we are? Is it the reality of all of our combined knowledge about transgenderism? Is it our desire to just may be have some one to share the road and our future with in the absence of suppressed thoughts and behaviours. Odd how often we are not as clear about why we need to share as we are about the urgency to do so.

As you read over these submission they hopefully we either bring forward past memories for you or assist you as you too make the decision to let one more person know the reality of your transgender expression.

Notes: From the Presidents

Diningroom in Downtown

Hull, Quebec.

Its been quite a year for me, working, living full time, and having the most wonderful people in this universe as my friends. Thank you for electing me for another term as your president and I will keep the

energy going, and to bring Gender Mosaic into the next mellinium. Its not the leader that makes the group strong, it is the people who attend that keep it going.

At the elections which were held February 6th 1999 at the social, we elected three new people to the board and I want to thank the members of the old executive board 1998 to 1999 for their commitment to Gender Mosaic. To Sharon our treasurer in her second term in balancing the books. Sharon has stepped down to teach accounting and balance million dollar accounts. To Lynn our secretary who kept the agenda and the minutes of each meeting in her lap top. Lynn has stepped down to focus on a major change in her life..but she has stayed on to help me with some of the computer stuff which I have not yet grasped. Good Luck Lynn. To Michelle Renee our Second Vice President, we look forward to your new challenges which you have chosen. Good Luck.

You have re-elected Margo as 1st VP and now have three new executive members which have taken on the open positions. Welcome to Steacie our new second VP, welcome Doreen our treasurer, who will help me keep on the strait and narrow as far as the finances are concerned. And welcome back

to one of Gender Mosaic long standing members Natalie. She has taken on the position several times throughout her membership in Gender Mosaic. Welcome to one of North America's oldest transgender support groups ladies. Its people like you that make the difference.

In another venue I want to thank all of you for your generous donations in helping me receive the Trinity award in Louisville Kentucky at the International Foundation Of Gender Education convention. Just to let you know I cried when I received this award because you helped me get there, I had a speech, but the emotion took over. The award is truly beautiful as you will see at the next social. I have to close now as I am getting emotional again...Thank you ever so much.....Joanne

A QUESTION OF HONESTY

Margo asked for contributions to the News Letter re coming out (or something like that), here are some personal thoughts to add to the mix.

I spent about 55 years not even knowing the truth about myself so I suppose honesty was not an issue until last June when I

finally connected to the web and accidentally discovered the term Transgender. A light came on and I realized I was not some sort of a freak that had to bury completion for female expression to be considered a sane acceptable person. The question of honesty was now a real one. In particular, with whom did I need to be honest about myself.

For years, in working with people, I had been saying that to have a happy fulfilled life one had to know oneself, and to accept oneself. Be honest with your self. I was a bit of an authority on this because my own unadmitted problems of not fully knowing myself, nor fully accepting myself. It was not all that bad because there was much about myself that I liked and affirmed. I just had to keep from thinking about those desires that I did not understand but knew they had to be denied. It's amazing how much time and energy that wastes.

Now when I look in the mirror while shaving in the morning I see the male presentation that is an OK person, no Greek God, but OK. Rather than denying the "dark side" I know what I see is simply incomplete. When I look in the mirror and see my femme presentation I know this too is me and OK. Definitely no Helen of Troy for sure, but still it's me and that's just fine.

But I don't just live to myself. As a human being I am a social being. Who else do I need to be honest with. First was my wife. I am lucky, this new information just answered some puzzling questions. Now that my complete self is expressed in our marriage our life together is even better. (I wish that could be true for everyone but human relationships are not that simple.)

A community of two is too small to satisfy the needs of the vast majority of people. It wasn't long before my feminine dimension needed to "get out of the house" This is a much more difficult decision. Fortunately I discovered Gender Mosaic, a safe community for my complete self. Kaitlin stepped into a larger community for the first time at the Annual meeting. While business meetings are not the joy of my life, it was a very significant, positive experience for me. My wife and I decided not to go to the "Coral Reef" as we had much to talk about back in our motel room. Sunday Kaitlin spent a few hours walking around taking in Winterfest. The experience made the six hour round trip worth while.

It has been a good beginning. How much further I need to go will be discovered. I can now be honest with myself and a significant number of other

people. Our family has grown and now live their own lives some distance away. I don't think they need to know about Kaitlin, and I don't, at least for the moment, need them to know. This kind of honesty is needed but need not be universal with everyone.

This is a bit of my story, it may or may not be helpful for others.
-- Kaitlin

Why My Dad

What happened to my dad? One day he is my dad, the next he is my second mom, don't take this the wrong way but it is really odd, he says its gender dysphoric that causes him to dress like a woman, and that he has been suppressing this behaviour for a while. I still can't figure it out. He attends meetings with support groups and what not. He is mad at me because I can't grasp the fact that my dad now dresses like a woman. Most of the time it is okay, he really doesn't wear dresses and everything, but he does wear nail polish which is okay I guess, he also recently got his ears pierced. but now he started wearing lipstick, maybe it is just today, maybe not. I asked him why he does it, he says he was born like this, and he needs to let it out. For some reason I am having a lot of trouble accepting this,

maybe I need help or something. Isn't there other ways to let this out, why is it he has to dress like a women, he is still my dad and still a lot of fun as he always was. He now has a better attitude about himself and others, I like him better this way, he doesn't get angry anymore, and isn't depressed. I am really happy he is feeling better about himself and everything. It is just that it is hard to accept such a drastic thing.

Lately I have not being doing very good in school, maybe it is because I can't get this off my mind, I think about it all the time, and I can't concentrate, he has told me why, but I still don't understand fully. I love my dad very much, I just don't know if I am ready to accept this. The people around him seem to be okay with this, why can't I be okay with it? I poke fun at him a bit, and it is all a joke, I hope I am not hurting him in anyway by doing this, I can't tell, he laughs and it is all fun, but then sometimes I think about what is going on and just wonder why?

It really isn't easy to just accept him, I love him, but it is hard. It is even harder to talk about it. I don't want my old dad back I like the new one, he is a lot more happy and not angry, he even dresses better than he did before, and the clothes he wears are really okay, except I don't know that he really needs the

make-up. I don't want my dad to be mad at me because I just can't accept him right away, my mom accepts him, but she, well, she pretty much accepts anything. Maybe I should meet some other people like him, or maybe even the families of these people, I think that would help me. I really feel as if I am losing my father figure because of this. I really love my dad

Falling Out Disclosure

by Viki

There is no better way to get over the jitters of going out in public then doing it all at once. Like jumping into the cold water at the beach. I was attending a support meeting not long ago and had spent quite a long time getting myself ready and trying to match my outfit. Not to mention makeup. By the appointed time I felt I was ready. Now comes the fun part, getting there. I stood in the front hall and looked outside. I was a little nervous finding out that it was still light out. How could I get to the truck without attracting any attention. I looked behind me and my daughter was standing in the kitchen. She didn't notice me.

After waiting till there seemed noone around, I slowly stepped out and crept down the

stairs. The house next door is split and faces my driveway. I see the old guy that lives there watching me so I scurry along in the hopes of reducing his vision to a blur. Then I see the lady in the next house getting into her van. I don't think she saw me as I wasn't causing a disturbance, yet. I had a little trouble getting into the truck in a long skirt, so I hiked it up to my waist and climbed in. I know its not ladylike, but I suppose ladys dont drive 4x4 pickup trucks.

Just then my hat fell off, and although I grabbed for it, it fell to the ground. I looked out and decided that I could reach it so I bent over and promptly fell out of the truck. I was clutching the keys in my hand and I have one of those remote keyless entry systems. Needless to say, I set off the panic button. So here I am rolling around on the ground in a long skirt with the horn howling and the lights a flashing, just in case nobody noticed.

A short time ago, this would have been a major setback for me. I am still laughing about it now. I guess things can change.

FROM MY EYES A PARTNERS PERSPECTIVE

By Marie

My husband likes to feel soft and cuddly on some occasions. He told me about his situation about five weeks ago. He dressed up on Halloween and everyone that saw him said that he looked "really good." We went to a social function about two weeks later, it was really fun to watch him put his makeup on in the truck with hardly any light. He then discovered that he could have put it on in the washroom at the function (that where everyone else putting theirs on). He only dresses in soft feminine clothes when he is alone for a few hours or when we have some time to ourselves.

He is not going for the hormones or surgery either, I love him very much for who he is no matter whether he is dressed in feminine clothes or in his non feminine clothes. It would never get to the point where one of us would leave. We also have children involved, one boy almost 15 and a girl who is 12. He is wearing nail polish and no one has even noticed that he has even gotten

his ears pierced. I should also say that we have been happily married for 16 years and this situation is not going to separate us.

Our love is stronger now than, than it ever was before. Since he has discovered his feminine side he does not have canker sores any more, he used to have them almost the same time every month. He has also been sleeping better since he has discovered his feminine side. We as wives, of husbands who dress on the feminine side sometimes, should accept them for who they are on the inside as well as on the outside.

My Coming out

First let me say I would like to share my experiences with you in the hopes that it may help. I do not want to suggest that you try it. Each situation is different. Anyway here goes.

First was my wife. As soon as I understood what I really was all about I felt I needed to share it with my wife. We have always been very close and I didn't want to keep it from her. Initially it was a shock as you could expect. I found with most people, after they get over the initial idea, it takes a few days for it to sink in. We will call it an aftershock. In general she became very

comfortable with the idea as she could see it was really still me and I was much happier. We decided to wait to tell the children. I had the same fears about somehow influencing them or having them reject me. Sometimes a wife may have an opinion but mine usually agrees with whatever I feel is appropriate.

My son was next, he has some fem tendencies although I have seen no evidence of cross dressing. (trust me, he has no opportunity) He and I were always close, and he noticed when I was getting ready to go out to a support group function as he was banned access to me. He eventually confronted me. His reaction wasn't so good at first, he wrote me a letter.

Good news is, he now is more adjusted to it. He takes my pictures, helps me with makeup, goes shopping with me, and borrows my face scrub and cream. We have actually become even closer, he has shared more of his fem side with me since then and he realizes that I really haven't changed.

My wish for him not to suffer the mental pain I have about this. This is who we are and we need to be who we are. I am too late starting.

If I had started to show my true colours as a teenager, I likely would have been better off. I didn't have what it took to do it then so I kept it a secret.

This was the case with my daughter. She will be 13 in July and has shown some negative reaction to some of the things she has seen me wearing. Last week I finally decided to tell her. Reaction was positive instantly she said "I don't mind if you want to wear a dress, just don't make me wear one, I'm a pants person" She always came to me for splinters and bandaids cause I was more gentle. Now she comes to me for everything. She used to be closet to my wife but that seems to be changing.

With all of my immediate family on board, I feel comfortable wearing what I want to around the house. There are days when this is necessary.

I started to feel much better at being accepted, and not having to sneak around trying not to get caught. I started to realize that part of my pain was caused by trying to carry this secret around inside me.

The first one outside of the family was a friend of about 12 years. He seemed to know a lot about it and had read some books. We were discussing the subject one day, and I

noticed he had a few facts wrong. I felt it necessary to correct him to set the picture straight. In the process, I let it out. He told me that he had no problem with this and that in no way would it effect our relationship at all. He even called me back after he left to assure me of this once again. There can be understanding people out there.

Later on he asked my permission to tell his girlfriend. He had only known her a short while and had been divorced for some 5 years. I told him he was crazy and he shouldn't take the risk. He said that I was important to him and he felt he wanted her to know. He reported back that she was fine and was waiting to meet me.

By now I am starting to feel pretty good. Perhaps I wouldn't loose all my friends after all. The next was a lady, my friends wife. She had noticed some changes in me and was asking a lot of questions. We eventually got around to it and I told her. She said that was fine and now understood why she felt so close to me and could talk to me so easily. The downside is I put her in a difficult position with her husband. After some discussion, we decided it would be best for me to tell him. That went well, he had no problem and proceeded to tell me of several problems he has had in

his life. I suppose to make me feel that we all have things we need to come to terms with. The next weekend we went on a day trip together, and although we didn't discuss it too much, we did talk a bit about it. He didn't mind me wearing tights or a velvet hat.

A short time later, another friend called to say he was coming over. It was a Monday, and I don't get much time to dress up on the weekends. I had announced to my wife that I was going to spend the day dressed up. I decided it was time to tell more people so I wouldn't have to scramble when someone came over.

The first was my next door neighbour. We had done a lot of things together and he could drop in any time. We had discussed the subject a bit but he never put it together. I told him I felt it was time to come clean.

He said that he had no problem with this and has even come over since then to fine me in a dress. Wow he says, all dressed up today, then we get on with what ever we are doing. He said something the other day that made me think. "You know, if someone else had told me this, I might have had some trouble believing it. But since it's you, I want to learn more" believing

in yourself, and presenting the facts in a serious light, goes a long way.

My other friend I hadn't seen as often lately as he has just had a new baby, well his wife did. He too said he had no problem. I told him that sometimes I felt really bad, and he was upset that I hadn't come to talk to him about it. He made it a point to say that he had no problem with this and that in no way does this effect our relationship. Soon after that he arranged for me to meet with our clients (I work with him) over the phone as he knows I don't like to go out for meetings. He now knows why. Next time he comes over, he will find me wearing a dress. This should stimulate some conversation.

The latest was only last week. We have been friends for over 20 years. He too didn't have a problem. Turns out his brother is gay, and the biggest problem he had was that their parents refused to accept him. My turn will come. His reaction can be summed up in his statement: "Why didn't you tell me sooner"

To date I have told 9.5 people including my wife and family, so far all has been positive. (The .5 is my friends girlfriend as she hasn't actually met me yet) I found for me that a great weight has been lifted

off my shoulders. This thing was burning a hole in me and hiding from everyone including myself was not a healthy choice. Be warned, the reaction I have received is apparently not typical. Within the month I will tell my mother, I am not sure what her reaction will be, but I feel it is necessary.

After that it doesn't matter. All of my friends and family have gathered around me in support. No one else really effects me.

Up & Coming

Gender Mosaic like all organizations need to on occasion stop, reflect and adapt to the current needs and demands of its members and the social and political environment. It is for this reason that several key initiatives will be presented to you. One such initiative is the decision of the Executive Committee to file for incorporation under the category of Charitable Non Profit. This will permit GM to issue tax receipts to those who donate funds to our organization, make application for transgender program funding and limit the directors liability. It is an idea that has been a long time coming but the time is truly now.

You will soon be receiving a proposal from your Executive Committee to amend the

current Bylaws which have remained unchanged since Feb. 1997. There are many proposed changes each one designed to increase the impact and interactions of GM as an organization and within our membership.

The Executive Committee has proposed a schedule of events, activities and support programs for the period April 1999 to February 2000. It is our response to your valued input on the recent survey.

You will notice in some months there are proposed events without a specific date, we will committed to firming up those dates at least two months in advance and informing you in this newsletter, at the various meeting and on the net. Please pick up the monthly calendars.

**IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT
YOU ONLY GET OUT OF
SOMETHING THAT
WHICH YOU ARE
PREPARED TO PUT IN
AND GM NEEDS YOU
ENERGY AND EFFORT**

Next Edition July 1999

A Special Focus on Medical, Psychological and Therapeutic support available for our Community

It is the plan to list those resources that have proven

helpful to our community.

The term community refers to our members, their partners and their families. You may never desire hormonal therapy but it would be nice to know a general practitioner who is transgender aware and supportive.

So here is your chance to share your both the positive and negative experiences as we build our GM Medical and Psychiatric support list.

Triple Echo

Editor Teddy Michaels
Box 163 478 Rideau St,
Ottawa, ON, K1N 5Z4

The current edition includes a significant article about Joanne Law and very important to GM members some of the history behind the creation and development of Gender Mosaic. I suggest you pick up a copy.

Please note if our history interests you GM needs a volunteer to help document that development and make available to both our members and other groups as they too grow, so see Margo to get started.

IFGE - 2002
In Ottawa

As you know Catherine,
Christina, Lynn, Margo and yes

Joanne went to the IFGE conference in Louisville Kentucky March 17-21, 1999. While like all conferences there were things that worked and those that did not. However, no matter how one looks at such a gathering of transgendered individuals, their partners and those who support the community one thing is clear. Each and every time we gather we break down barriers and fears inside the souls of those who participate. The problem is only a few get to go, so may be the obvious answer is that we should bring IFGE here and then as the host organization many more Canadians get the benefit of the experience as we build a stronger Transgender Community integrated within our society at large.

A small group of brave GM members did just that and proposed to IFGE that we host the year 2002 conference. Now is the time to see what we are made up of, as we prepare a submission and possibly host this international event.

It is important to note that the Toronto IFGE Conference last year was seen as one of the most well run, successful and positive conferences IFGE has experienced in years. Maybe we Canadians can lead once again in the year 2002. If your are interested in additional information, have ideas and

want to get involved please see
Lynn Nicole Lefevre

Executive Committee

President: Joanne Law
First VP: Margo Ross
Second VP: Steacie
Secretary: Natalie
Treasury: Doreen

Gender Mosaic

P.O. Box 7421 Vanier,
Ontario, K1L 8E4
770 - 1945
Email gender_moscai@geocities.co

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